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FOLLOWING REPEAT BONN 10245 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LONDON PARIS
BRUSSELS THE HAGUE ROME NATO USNMR SHAPE JUNE 27TH

QUOTE

S E C R E T BONN 10245

FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S VIEWS ON CURRENT
DEFENSE ISSUES

BEGIN SUMMARY: I CALLED ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER JUNE
24 AND FOUND HIM EXTREMELY WELL-SATISFIED WITH HIS VISIT
LAST MONTH WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER IN WASHINGTON. HE
WAS, HOWEVER, DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS
FOR EUROPEAN DEFENSE AND HE ASKED ME TO CONVEY HIS HOPE
THAT WE WILL PUSH LONDON TO AVOID CUTS IN UK DEFENSE
COMMITMENTS. HE ALSO COMMENTED NEGATIVELY ON PROSPECTS
FOR AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR THE FRG NAVY. DETAILS FOLLOW.
END SUMMARY

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1. LEBER NOTED THERE HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY UNIVERSAL AGREEMENT ON ALL THE MATTERS HE AND SECRETARY SCHLESINGER DISCUSSED ON MAY 30-31. A FUNDAMENTAL SIMILARITY OF VIEWS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE U.S. AND FRG TO SEE EYE-TO-EYE ON PRACTICALLY ALL QUESTIONS IN THE RECENT DPC AND NPG MINISTERIALS AND PROVIDE FOR EFFECTIVE BILATERAL COOPERATION IN THESE FORUMS. HE ALSO REFERRED TO USEFUL U.S.-FRG BILATERAL COOPERATION ON WARSAW PACT STRENGTH AND MILITARY BALANCE PROBLEMS, ADDING THAT EASTERN TANK SUPERIORITY CONTINUES TO BE A SOURCE OF WORRY FOR HIM. AS IN THE PAST, LEBER PRAISED SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S NUCLEAR RETARGETING IDEAS, ADDING THERE WAS GOOD MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING ON THE MATTER. HE ALSO WELCOMED THE FINAL ACHIEVEMENT OF A NEW OFFSET AGREEMENT, BELIEVING IT TOO HAS MADE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE IN U.S.-FRG RELATIONS.

2. LEBER WAS PLEASED THAT HIS VISIT ALSO GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO TALK TO A NUMBER OF SENATORS, AMONG THEM KENNEDY, JACKSON, MANSFIELD, NUNN AND SYMINGTON. WITH SOME OF THEM HE APPARENTLY HAD A CHANCE TO TRADE VIEWS IN SOME DEPTH ON DEFENSE MATTERS, AND HE APPARENTLY BELIEVES THERE IS NOW LESS LIKELIHOOD OF A U.S. UNILATERAL TROOP REDUCTION THAN IN THE RECENT PAST. SENATOR NUNN SEEMED TO HAVE CONVINCED HIM THAT THE 20,000 MAN LOGISTICAL AND SUPPORT TROOP REDUCTION PROPOSAL WAS MOTIVATED BY THE CONGRESS' DESIRE TO RATIONALIZE OUR TROOP PRESENCE AND NOT RPT NOT REDUCE IT. WITH REGARD TO HIS CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR SYMINGTON, WE HEARD SEPARATELY FROM THE MOD STAFF THAT LEBER CLEARED UP THE SENATOR'S MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HIS IDEAS ON THE USE AND STATIONING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN FRG.

3. IN CONTRAST TO HIS SATISFACTION WITH U.S.-FRG DEFENSE RELATIONS, LEBER WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THE STATE OF NATO DEFENSES OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. HE EMPHASIZED HIS PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT THE EUROPEANS MUST MAINTAIN STRONG CONVENTIONAL FORCES, NOT ONLY FOR DETERRENCE, BUT AS A CONTRIBUTION NECESSARY TO KEEP U.S. CONVENTIONAL FORCES, AS WELL AS THE NUCLEAR
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DETERRENT, IN EUROPE. LEBER HAS, OF COURSE, TAKEN A LEAD IN THE ALLIANCE IN STRESSING THAT IT IS WHOLLY UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE U.S. TO BEAR THE COST OF THE NUCLEAR DETERRENT, AS WELL AS PART OF THE CONVENTIONAL, IF THE EUROPEANS DO NOT CARRY A FAIR SHARE OF THE BURDEN.

4. LEBER OBSERVED THAT IF HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE

DUTCH INTENTIONS TOWARD DEFENSE, HE WAS EVEN MORE WORRIED THAT THE U.K. LABOR GOVERNMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY GIVE INTO ECONOMIC PRESSURES TO REDUCE THEIR OVERSEAS FORCES. HE THOUGHT HIS VIGOROUS INTERVENTIONS WITH DUTCH DEFENSE MINISTER VREDLING HAD, OR WILL, BLOCK THE LARGER PART OF THE ORIGINAL DUTCH REDUCTION. HE NOTED THAT U.K. PLANS WERE NOT YET FINAL, BUT HE APPEARED CONVINCED THAT PROSPECTS ARE AT BEST POOR THAT THE U.K. WILL NOT EVENTUALLY REDUCE THE BAOR. IN THIS REGARD, HE

SAID THE BAOR'S COMBAT UNITS HAD NOT BEEN KEPT AT FULL STRENGTH IN THE RECENT PAST, BUT WHAT BOTHERED HIM NOW WAS THE PROSPECT OF A DEFINITIVE OFFICIAL CUT. IN HIS WORDS, THIS WOULD BE "DISASTROUS."

5. POINTING TO THE EXCELLENT STATE OF U.S.-U.K. RELATIONS LEBER WENT ON TO SAY HE HOPED WASHINGTON WOULD WEIGH IN HEAVILY WITH LONDON TO BLOCK ANY REDUCTIONS. HE BELIEVES AN OFFICIAL CUT IN THE BAOR, OR REDUCTIONS IN THE U.K. DEFENSE EFFORT, MAY SET OFF AN IRREVERSIBLE CHAIN REACTION LEADING TO FURTHER CUTS IN DEFENSE EFFORTS. I TOLD HIM WE WOULD INFORM WASHINGTON OF HIS REQUEST THAT WE MAKE SOME KIND OF STRONG REPRESENTATIONS TO LONDON ON THE MATTER.

6. LEBER MADE TWO OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST, ONE ON PROSPECTS FOR FRENCH COOPERATION ON DEFENSE, AND THE OTHER, ON THE FRG NAVY MISSION IN THE ATLANTIC. ON THE FORMER, HE HELD OUT LITTLE HOPE THAT GISCARD WOULD PERMIT MORE MILITARY COOPERATION WITH NATO, BUT THOUGHT AT LEAST HE WOULD BRAKE THE TENDENCY FOR FRANCE TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM NATO. IT IS, HOWEVER, QUITE ANOTHER QUESTION WHETHER GISCARD WILL REVERSE FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY; HERE,
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ONLY TIME WILL TELL.

7. FINALLY, LEBER NOTED HE RESERVED HIS POSITION ON SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S INTEREST THAT THE GERMAN NAVY ASSUME AN ATLANTIC MISSION. HE THOUGHT IT WAS NOT UNREALISTIC FOR THE FRG TO ACCEPT AN EXPANDED NAVAL RULE IN THE NORTH SEA; THIS, HE SAID, HE INTENDED TO STUDY. BUT HE THOUGHT THE GERMAN NAVY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO MUCH IN THE ATLANTIC; HE POINTED TO THE UK AS MORE COMPETENT TO UNDERTAKE AN EXPANDED NAVAL MISSION. HE EMPHASIZED THE FRG SHOULD CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS ON GROUND ROLES AND MISSIONS ON THE CENTRAL FRONT AS MORE APPROPRIATE FOR RATIONALIZED EFFORTS.

8. COMMENT: WE HAD HEARD EARLIER FROM MOD SOURCES THAT

LEBER WAS EXTREMELY GRATIFIED WITH THE TREATMENT WASHINGTON EXTENDED HIM IN RECENT MONTHS; THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR THE TIME WHICH SECRETARY KISSINGER, SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, VICE PRESIDENT FORD AND SEVERAL SENATORS HAVE SPENT WITH HIM. HE, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER MAJOR FRG POLITICIAN, LOOKS TO THE U.S. AS THE ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT IN FRG SECURITY, AND HE BELIEVES NOTHING SHOULD BE ALLOWED WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY UNDERMINE THE U.S.-FRG DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP. WE HAVE FOUND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OVER THE PAST YEAR QUITE READY TO SPECULATE OR CONSIDER ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR CLOSER FRENCH COOPERATION, EITHER BILATERALLY OR IN SOME UNDEFINED BROADER EUROPEAN CONTEXT, SUCH AS A EUROPEAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY. HE REMAINS, HOWEVER, SKEPTICAL ABOUT SUCH IDEAS AND PREFERS TO DEAL WITH REALITIES NOT POSSIBILITIES. HE PUTS ALL HIS EGGS IN THE U.S. BASKET.

9. WE ALSO HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAS MUCH LESS HOPE NOW THAN WHEN HE TOOK OVER THE DEFENSE MINISTRY THAT EUROGROUP PROGRAMS OR EFFORTS WILL EVER REPLACE MUCH OF THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AT LEAST IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. FOR THIS REASON WE EXPECT HE WILL BE READY TO ESTABLISH EVEN CLOSER DEFENSE TIES WITH US, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL NECESSITIES WILL OR COURSE REQUIRE HIM TO MAINTAIN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN
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ALLIES AS WELL. BUT LEBER REFLECTS THE GROWING FEAR (WHICH WE HEAR THROUGHOUT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY) THAT WE ARE WITNESSING THE BEGINNING OF AN IMPORTANT, PERHAPS IRREVERSIBLE, DECLINE IN EUROPE'S COMMITMENT TO DEFENSE. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, INSTABILITY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, A DECLINING INTEREST IN PUBLIC READINESS TO SUPPORT DEFENSE - ESPECIALLY IN AN ERA OF DETENTE - ALL CONTRIBUTE TO LEBER'S FEARS. LIKE OTHER GERMAN POLITICIANS, HE KNOWS THAT OTHER ALLIES ARE ALL TOO READY TO SHIFT DEFENSE BURDENS TO THE FRG; LIKE THEM, HE KNOWS THERE IS A POLITICAL LIMIT TO WHAT THE GERMAN PUBLIC WILL ACCEPT. MEANWHILE LEBER WILL LOOK TO US FOR HELP IN KEEPING EUROPEAN EFFORTS AT ACCEPTABLE LEVELS. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO LEARN OF ANY STEPS WE HAVE TAKEN OR PLAN VIS-A-VIS THE U.S. DEFENSE REVIEW.
HILLENBRAND UNQUOTE SISCO

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